



## **ANIMAL DEVAR TORAH: KINDNESS**

**ONE OF OUR GREAT RABBIS WHO LIVED ALMOST TWO THOUSAND YEARS AGO—HIS NAME WAS JUDAH HA-NASI, WHICH MEANS, “JUDAH THE PRINCE”—WAS SAID TO HAVE SUFFERED GREAT PAIN FOR MANY YEARS OF HIS LIFE, EVEN THOUGH HE WAS THE WISEST AND FAIREST AND KINDEST OF MEN.**

- So it was asked, Why should such a good man have to suffer such awful pain?
- The answer was that, once, a calf was being taken to be slaughtered; it broke away, hid under the Rabbi Judah’s cloak, and begged not to be taken.
- As many people in the marketplace watched, Rabbi Judah said to the calf: “Go, this is the purpose for which you were created—to be slaughtered for food.”
- And at that moment it was said in heaven, “Since he has no pity on a poor calf, let us make Rabbi Judah suffer.”

**DO YOU THINK IT WAS RIGHT THAT RABBI JUDAH SENT THE CALF TO BE SLAUGHTERED?**

- What would you have done if it came to you for protection?
- If you would have spared its life, why would you have done that?

**ANOTHER GREAT RABBI AND TEACHER, SHERIRA BEN CHANINA, WHO LIVED ABOUT A THOUSAND YEARS AGO, WAS ASKED A QUESTION ABOUT RABBI JUDAH:**

- If Rabbi Judah was punished because he handed a calf over to be slaughtered, shouldn’t we learn from this not to slaughter or kill animals?
- And Sherira ben Chanina answered: “Animals that are threatening human life—such as rabid dogs, vicious lions, or poisonous snakes—must be killed. And we need not save animals that are to be slaughtered for food.”

**THEN WHY DO YOU THINK THE RABBIS SAID THAT RABBI JUDAH WAS PUNISHED WITH SO MUCH PAIN FOR SENDING THE CALF TO ITS DEATH?**

- He was punished not for what he *did* but for what he *failed* to do.
- If he had taken pity on the calf and shown it mercy, many other people who were watching would have learned a good lesson.

- As it was, those who saw him hand the animal over to the slaughterer, even though it was legal, were likely to become more cold-hearted towards both animals and people.
- The rabbis were trying to teach us that whenever we have the chance to teach others to be kind, we must do that.

**WHY DO YOU THINK IT'S IMPORTANT TO TEACH PEOPLE TO BE KIND TO ANIMALS?**

- Have you every known someone who was mean to animals?
- How did that person treat other *people*?



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